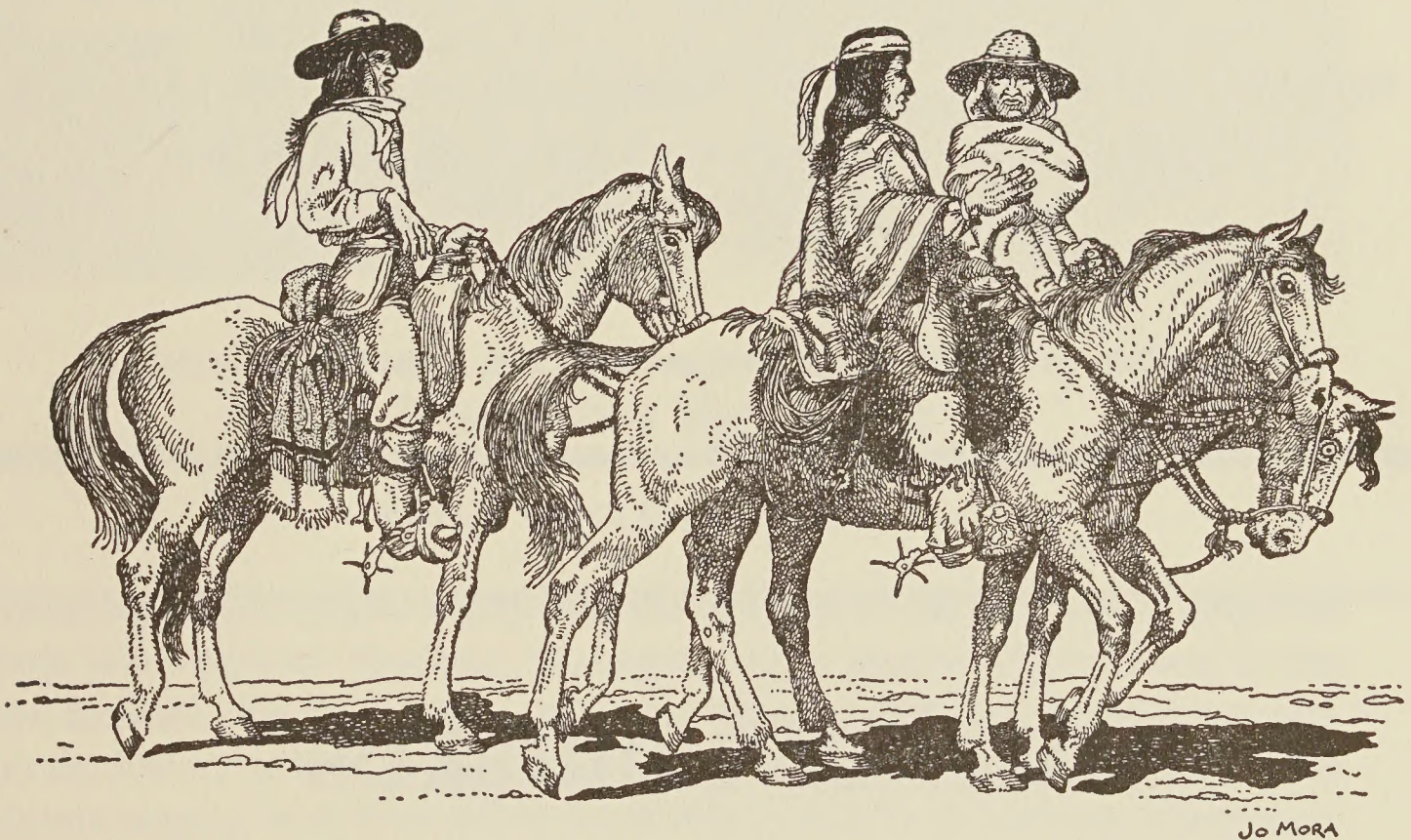


THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY

LXXXII NUMBER 4 OCTOBER 2017



A Note from the Editor PETER KOCH

The Life and Times of Jo Mora GAIL JONES

The American Bookbinders Museum MADELEINE ROBINS

Reviews

The Best of the West GARY F. KURUTZ

Dreaming on the Edge DANELLE MOON

Peter Koch Printer BRUCE WHITEMAN

Some Problems with Red SUSAN ROETHER

GERALD W. CLOUD

RARE BOOKS | MANUSCRIPTS | ARCHIVES

San Francisco, California

Specializing in literature, books about books, continental books,
and archives of all kinds



Gerald W. Cloud represents the French engraver and book artist DIDIER MUTEL

Don't miss Didier's exhibition of new works, November 23-30, 2017
Maggs Bros., 48 Bedford Sq., London, UK

Visit our website for current catalogs: www.gwcbooks.com | gerald@gwcbooks.com

Atelier Contakos

HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHIC PROCESSES

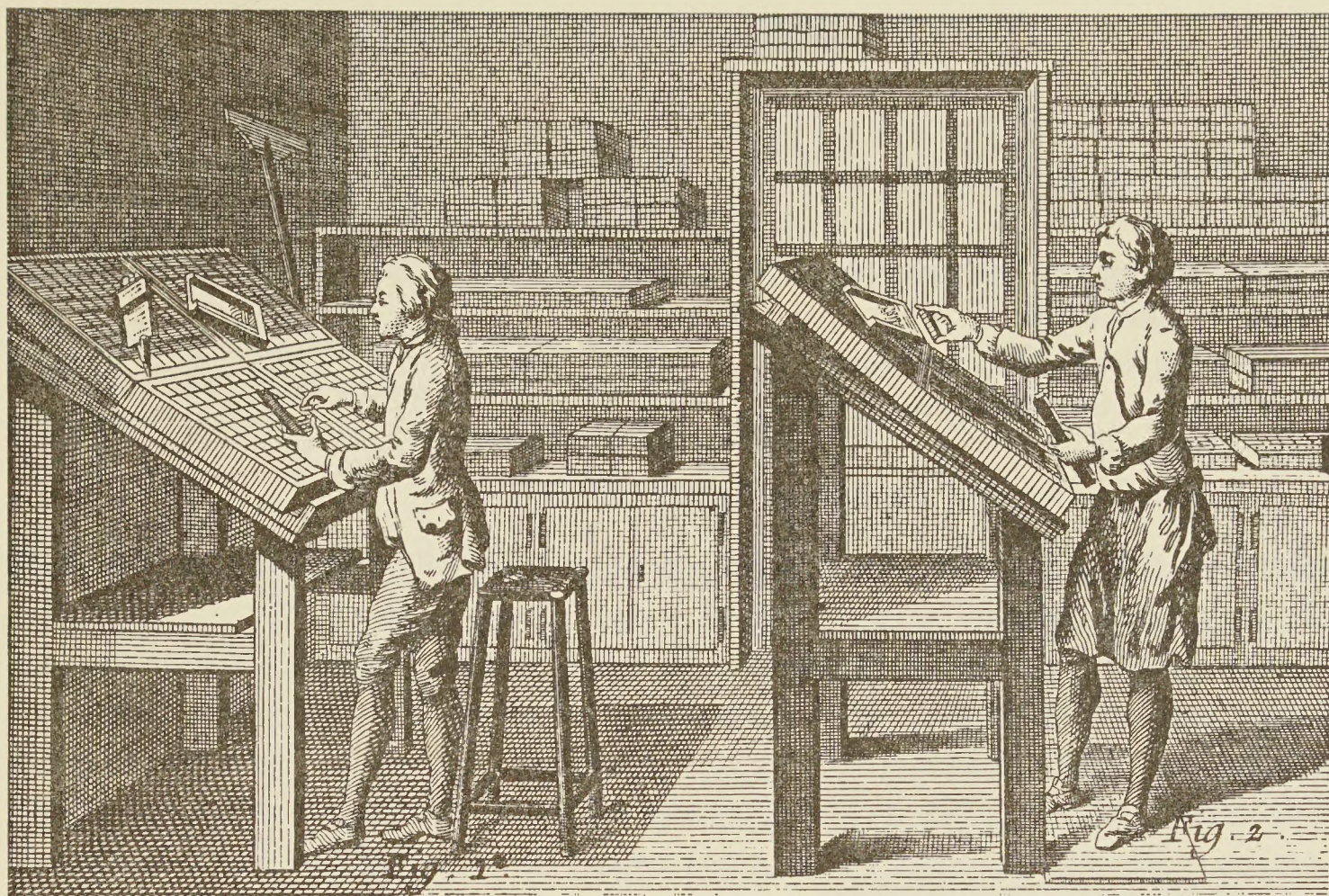
ENGRAVED PRINTS & ARTISTS' BOOKS

We emphasize preserving both traditional practices and cultural
heritage and display art and books in dialogue.



Peter Bogardus: *Places of Reverence* will be on display in London at
Henry Sotheran's of Sackville Street in Piccadilly
during the month of October, 2017

For news, exhibitions, and events:
www.ateliercontakos.com kate.contakos@gmail.com



A Note from the Editor

PETER RUTLEDGE KOCH

This issue completes volume eighty-two, the first year of the *Book Club of California Quarterly* with a separate *Newsletter*. We hope that you approve of the change. In this volume, including the present issue, we have published eight book reviews, two articles on the history of literary publishing in California, and nine bibliophilic articles on subjects ranging from the CODEX Book Fair and the book arts to personal reminiscences and opinions. There are articles and essays in the works describing unusual and interesting California libraries, more book reviews, and interviews with collectors. In the spirit of all literary book reviews and bibliophilic journals, we encourage learned discussions and polemic intended to enlighten and entertain. Dissenting opinions will be accepted in good faith and published if sufficiently amusing. Letters to the editor are encouraged.

There have been a select few publications cross my desk in the past few months that I would like to bring to your attention. August Kleinzahler, San Francisco poet and essayist, has issued a new collection of poems, *Hollyhocks in the Fog: Selected San Francisco Poems / Before Dawn on Bluff Road: Selected New Jersey Poems* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017). Farrar, Straus and Giroux publishers count among their authors some of the finest in our language, including Joseph Brodsky, T. S. Eliot, and Jack Kerouac. In addition to FS&G, Kleinzahler's poems appear sporadically in the *London Review Of Books*—well worth the subscription price for that alone. This volume has a dos-a-dos structure, and the title poem for side one (like an old record) reads like a noir novel about to launch into a seedy bar in the Tenderloin or maybe the Mission District:

From "Hollyhocks in the Fog"

Every evening smoke blows in from the sea, sea
 smoke, ghost vapor
 of lost frigates, sunken destroyers.
 It hangs over the eucalyptus grove,
 cancels the hills,
 curls around garbage sacks outside the lesbian bar.

All his San Francisco poems are full of fog and foghorns, wild characters, and the smell of eucalyptus trees.

From "Summer Journal"

[Cloud Forest]

I took him up to the Cloud Forest,
 just behind the Medical Center.
 Snails crunched in the soft duff underfoot.
 This upset him.
 Water dripping from the eucalyptus;
 The sharp tap-tap of a downey woodpecker,
 its sound reverberating among the treetops.

—*Ischi, Issa, Issa, Ischi.*

Try saying that ten times fast as you can.
 The haiku master in his quilted priest robes,
 the "last wild Indian" in his bark knickers.
 They took a good long look at each other.
 Actually, they could well have passed for brothers,
 the heathen fitter and darker
 by several shades. Gentile sorts, the two of them,
 and taciturn as can be. No harm there;
 not like an Algonquin Round Table was on tap.
 Can't really say what I reckoned was on tap.
 Ischi, since they first smoked him out,
 behind the slaughterhouse over in Oroville,
 this is now his place, his home.
 Every so often they come up the hill and fetch him:
 some big-shot out-of-town phrenologist
 wanting to whip out the calipers, poke him, make him say *ahhh*.
 Otherwise, they leave him be,
 happy as Larry with his grubs and chipmunks and handicrafts.

Issa much taken with the yellow banana slugs:
 Readers well know how he feels about gastropods,
 fifty-four haiku devoted to the snail alone.

The two of them seem to be hitting it off,
 in their quiet way, just sitting there on a log,
 the one whittling away, the other staring at the ground.
 Don't even seem aware that I'm around.

The juxtaposition of the Yahi indian Ishi (whose name means “man”) and the Japanese poet Issa (“cup of tea”) atop a eucalyptus-covered hill a short distance from the poet’s house in Cole Valley is a cool image of what California seems to succeed at without really trying—destroying native populations while acknowledging influences from the “Orient.” Forty years ago in *Archetype West: The Pacific Coast as a Literary Region*, the poet and printer William Everson explained, “California looks towards the Orient; its young intellectuals and truth-seekers are far more open to untraditional and experimental concepts than their counterparts in the fortresses of New York and New England...” (Oyez Press, 1976). What a collision. Ishi and Issa sitting together on hospital hill (somewhere near the Nike Missile Control Site SF89C) with August (“venerable”) looking on. Something for those young turks to contemplate while sitting on their plugged-in black bus to Googleland and back.

Kleinzahler’s collection of occasional essays, *Cutty, One Rock: Low Characters and Strange Places Gently Explained* (FS&G, 2005) contains two remarkable pieces, the first being “The Zam Zam Room,” which opens like this: “The best bar in San Francisco reopened for business the other day under new management. But it is no good.” How many of us visited the Persian Aub Zam Zam bar on Haight Street dubbed by Herb Cain as “the holy shrine of the dry martini?” It was legendary in its day and beyond. Kleinzahler was a regular. And a highly literate drinker as well. The story is deeply sensitive to the ruin of things that poets often choose to celebrate, including their favorite watering holes.

The second piece, “Cutty, One Rock,” is one of the most touching tributes to an older brother I have ever read. Like *A River Runs Through It* by Norman Maclean, Kleinzahler writes from a sense of powerlessness in the face of his hero’s self-destruction. The title comes from his brother’s favorite drink. He writes, “I imitated everything about my brother, down to his eccentric handwriting and the way of holding a whiskey glass, mannerisms of his which, along with scores of others have become my own. I often think that we’re all mere composites of our favorite people’s habits: the way we talk and gesture and laugh, how we comb our hair and walk.”



A number of contemporary California book artists and printers are justly celebrated in the blockbuster catalogue *Booknesses: Artists' Books from the Jack Ginsberg Collection* (University of Johannesburg, 2017). Both mentioned and illustrated are works by:

Felicia Rice, Moving Parts Press, Santa Cruz; Harry and Sandra Reese, Turkey Press, Isla Vista; Charles Hobson, Pacific Editions, San Francisco; Arne Wolf, Berkeley; Peter Rutledge Koch, Editions Koch, Berkeley; Casey Gardner, Set in Motion Press, Berkeley; Julie Chen, Flying Fish Press, Berkeley; Fred Rinne, San Francisco; Ed Ruscha, Los Angeles; Christopher K. Wilde, Artichoke Yink Press, Los Angeles, Dana Smith, San Francisco; Andrew Hoyem, Arion Press, San Francisco; Gloria Helfgott, Los Angeles. California weighs heavily on the scale of international book arts for a number of reasons, one of which our Book Club of California was founded upon—a distinguished printing tradition and a generous supply of talented artists, printers, bookbinders, papermakers, and illustrators.

The Ginsberg collection is one of the world's truly important private collections of the modern and contemporary artists' book. The nineteenth and twentieth century highlights are very high indeed: Matisse's *Jazz* and Saunia Delaunay and Blaise Cendrars's *Prose du Transsibérien*; *Une Semaine de Bonté* by Max Ernst (Editions Jeanne Buche, 1934); *Three Poems* by Octavio Paz and illustrated by Robert Motherwell (Limited Editions Club, 1987); *Foirades/Fizzles* by Samuel Beckett and Jasper Johns (Petersburg Press, 1976); *The Eclogues of Virgil* illustrated by Aristide Maillol (The Cranach Press, 1927); *Dlya Golosa* by El Lissitzky (Gosizdat, 1923); and more to be sure. We Californians are happy to find ourselves among the giants in this stupendous collection currently being gifted to the University of Johannesburg—a fine example of private collecting for the public good.

The catalogue opens with this statement from Federico Freschi, Dean of the Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture at the University of Johannesburg: "Artists' books exist at a compelling intersection of art and literature . . . At the intersection of physicality and imagination." The essays that accompany the illustrated books are varied and somewhat skewed towards the academic art historian, but that may be excused considering it is, after all, an academic publication.

I cannot help but note that a considerable number of the contemporary books in his superb collection are by *living* artists, not only from California but also from all over the world, most of whom regularly attend the CODEX International Book Fair and Symposium. With over thirty countries represented in 2017, CODEX provides book collectors convenient access to a stunning international array of book artists, printers, and publishers. Jack Ginsberg, who I believe comes the farthest, is one stalwart collector among the many who have taken advantage of our "local" book fair.



Poet, essayist, and translator Andrew Schelling has recently completed an entertaining and very readable study, *Tracks Along the Coast: Jaime de Angulo & Pacific Coast Culture* (Counterpoint, 2017). Counterpoint Press, formerly Shoemaker & Hoard, formerly North Point Press, has as distinguished a list of American writers (including many from California) as any literary publishing house in the country, including Gary Snyder, Guy Davenport, Robert Bringham, Wendell Berry, Robert Hass, W. S. Merwin, M. F. K. Fisher, and others. *Tracks Along the Coast* is a tale of California's

bohemian poets and writers from 1906 to 1950 as seen through the adventures and misadventures of a quintessential rascal, Jaime De Angulo. De Angulo, born in Paris, cowboyed in the Colorado Rockies, traveled in South America, arrived in San Francisco the day before the great San Francisco earthquake, and ten years later homesteaded in Big Sur. He studied medicine at Johns Hopkins and never practiced. A largely self-taught anthropologist, he became a crack-shot linguist and recorded nearly thirty Native American languages ranging from California to Oaxaca, most notably the Achumawi in Northern California's Pitt River country. Being a poet himself, he was able to tell marvelous tales and sing wild songs. His two-volume masterpiece of storytelling, *Old Time Stories* (Turtle Island, 1976), and the KPFA tapes, recorded in 1949 and loosely titled *Indian Tales*, are his translations of the stories he learned while recording the Pit River languages during the 1920s. His novel *The Lariat* (first published in 1927 and re-issued in 2010 by Counterpoint Press), is situated during the Spanish conquest of California at Mission Carmel, and is an early example of magic realism and the intermingling of colonial and native cultures.

De Angulo's friends and colleagues with whom he visited and corresponded make up a truly impressive list. Franz Boaz, Edward Sapir, and Alfred Kroeber, among the linguists; Carl Jung among the psychologists; Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Robinson Jeffers, Henry Miller, Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, and D. H. Lawrence among the bohemians, writers, and poets.

The San Francisco renaissance poet Robert Duncan lived with de Angulo for the last two years of his life, serving as his amanuensis. Duncan bobbed back and forth between the homes of de Angulo and Mary Fabilli, the "beat" poet who, endeavoring to save de Angulo's soul from hellfire, arranged that the old anarcho-polytheist return to his Catholic roots by receiving absolution on his deathbed. Schelling weaves these threads and many more into a compelling and occasionally jumbled narrative in which tales of homesteading on Partington Ridge in Big Sur, poets and native medicine men hanging out in the Berkeley Hills, wives, wild men, wilderness ranching, and writing, commingle to portray an extraordinary man and his times.



Robinson Jeffers, poet and the scourge of modernists (see *Poems* published by the Book Club of California in 1928) is re-surfacing in a radical and timely publishing/activist venture out of England called The Dark Mountain Project, named after the concluding words of his poem "Rearmament":

These grand and fatal movements toward death: the grandeur of the mass
 Makes pity a fool, the tearing pity
 For the atoms of the mass, the persons, the victims, makes it seem monstrous
 To admire the tragic beauty they build.
 It is beautiful as a river flowing or a slowly gathering
 Glacier on a high mountain rock-face,

Bound to plow down a forest, or as frost in November,
 The gold and flaming death-dance for leaves,
 Or a girl in the night of her spent maidenhood, bleeding and kissing.
 I would burn my right hand in a slow fire
 To change the future ... I should do foolishly. The beauty of modern
 Man is not in the persons but in the
 Disastrous rhythm, the heavy and mobile masses, the dance of the
 Dream-led masses down the dark mountain.

—Robinson Jeffers, 1935

The Dark Mountain Project has published eleven well-designed and handsomely produced books to date. The title of volume ten, *Uncivilized Poetics*, caught my eye and I ordered it immediately. I was not disappointed—in fact I was pleased to see work by friends and favored poets including California poet Robert Hass, Canadian poets Robert Bringham and Jan Zwicky, and English book-artist and writer Nancy Campbell. The personage behind much of this project is the poet and philosopher Paul Kingsnorth who lives in West Ireland. Kingsnorth, a self-described “recovering environmentalist,” is on a tour of California as I write this note, appearing at the Tor House Foundation in Carmel and in the Bay Area promoting his latest book *Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist*. Don’t expect some Trumpian anti-environmentalist rhetoric, but rather a move towards an even more radical questioning.

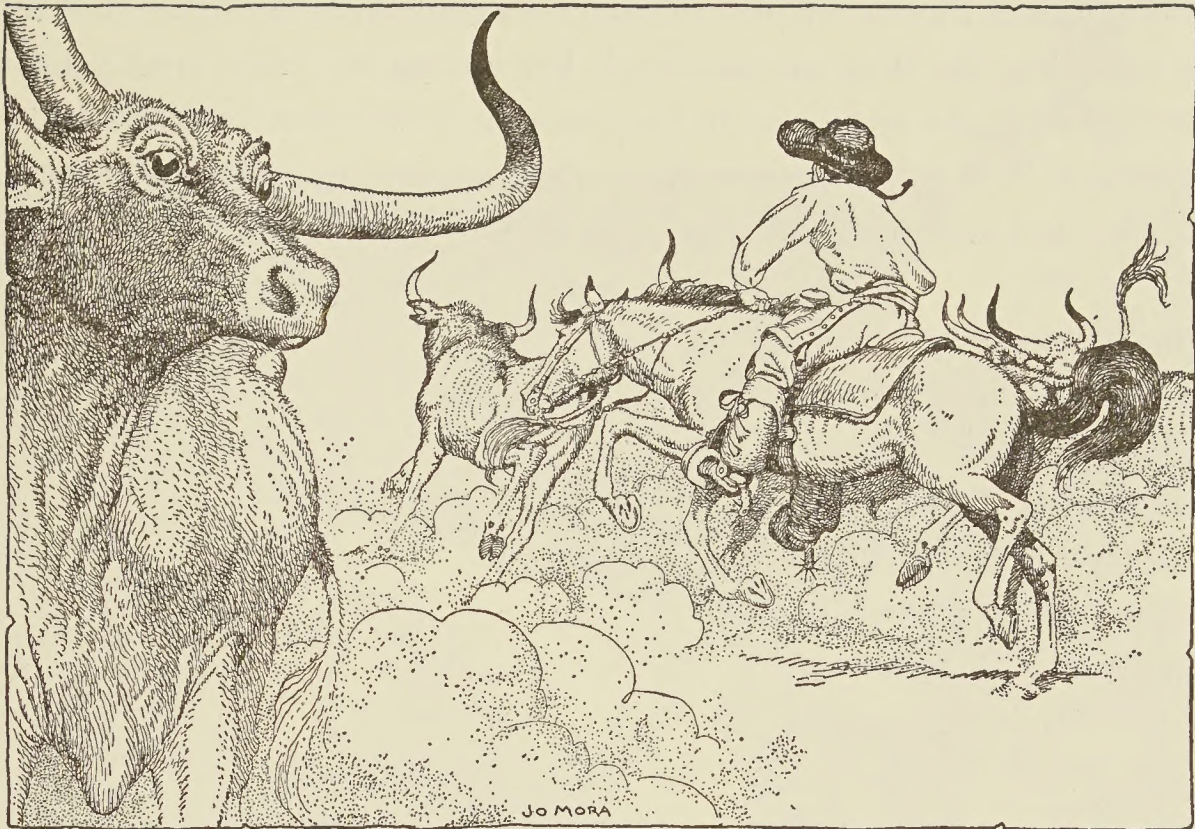
Kingsnorth has adopted Jeffers’ “inhumanism” as the philosophical keynote of his project, which is perhaps best described as the poetics of the natural languages spoken by all beings both human and “other”—including the hawk and the lion. The *Dark Mountain Manifesto* speaks of a trans-species connection that, when listened to and occasionally lived, begins to break down the more isolating and alienating forms of modern civilization—which is exactly where the Dark Mountain folks locate both blame and a tiny little flicker of hope. Somehow I think Jeffers would agree.

REFERENCED WORKS

August Kleinzahler, *Hollyhocks in the Fog: Selected San Francisco Poems / Before Dawn on Bluff Road: Selected New Jersey Poems*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017.

David Paton, et al. *Booknesses: Artists’ Books from the Jack Ginsberg Collection*. Johannesburg, South Africa: University of Johannesburg, 2017. Distributed in the USA by Oak Knoll Books.

Andrew Schelling, *Tracks Along The Left Coast: Jaime de Angulo & the Pacific Coast*. Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2017.



The Life and Times of Jo Mora: Iconic Artist of the American West

GAIL JONES

The next book to be published by the Book Club of California is Peter Hiller's biography of artist Jo Mora (1876–1947), a gifted illustrator, painter, writer, photographer, cartographer, and sculptor of the American West. For art and book lovers, *The Life and Times of Jo Mora* is a must-have for its attributes as a fine press publication, as well as its intimate portrayal of a man who lived the Western life depicted in his art. Mora fans will enjoy new material, and all readers will discover a detailed, fascinating portrait of an often overlooked artist.

"Why not make an absolutely gorgeous book?" asked a member of the publications committee early in the planning process, to which the entire committee replied—as they are wont to do—"Why not, indeed?" We selected Norman Clayton of Classic Letterpress for the design and printing, and Klaus-Ullrich Röttscher of Pettingell Book Bindery for the binding. Many of you are familiar with Clayton's fine press work for the Book Club's *Poetry at the Edge: Five Contemporary California Poets*, edited and designed by Carolee Campbell. Clayton has also printed several issues of the *Book Club of California Quarterly News-Letter*, to high acclaim. Hiller's book will reflect the same production values, with illustrations to do justice to Mora's art and two maps by Nigel Holmes. As Mora is so well known for his iconic *cartes*—intricate pictorial maps of Yosemite, Carmel, Los Angeles, and other locations—fold-out reproductions of these works may appear in some or all editions of the book.

Hiller traces Mora's unconventional life as he leaves the comfort of his East Coast home to explore the West on horseback, live among the Hopi, marry and settle in the Monterey Peninsula, and go on to become one of the most inventive and versatile artists of his era. While the narrative flows chronologically, Hiller also focuses on Mora's geographic and artistic progression, as indicated by the book's chapters:

Growing into the Arts

Wanderlust, Vaqueros and the Missions of California

Off to the Sierras

Yosemite and the Trail to Arizona

Hopi Land: A Dream Come True

Settling and Working in California

Training for the Great War

The Lure to the Monterey Peninsula

Mapping History: The Cartes

Jo Mora as Writer and Illustrator

Abounding Talent: Etchings and Dioramas

The End of the Trail: Putting Away the Sculpting Tools

Clayton is excited to work on this first comprehensive look at Mora's life. As the book's editor, I share his enthusiasm in bringing to light information of artistic and historical significance. The many excerpts from Mora's journals and literary efforts add greatly to the book, revealing an intellectual discernment, originality, and humor that enhance our appreciation of his prolific body of visual art comprising sculpture, paintings, architectural adornment, dioramas, and maps.

The significance of Mora's insights into his life and work, as described in his own words—many presented here for the first time—cannot be underestimated. Here is Mora, living among the Hopi, describing what few outsiders had ever seen, a *katchina* dance:

The bodies of the men, the nude torsos, painted in all different colors, the necks encircled with strings of coral beads, of wampum, of sky-blue turquoise—and silver necklaces the Navajo make. Then colored bracelets, & pendant eagle feathers; and rattles. . . . Naked painted legs, with ornaments of all kinds—but I can't commence to describe—it's almost too bewildering!

Just imagine these picturesque devils dancing in the narrow precipice bound street (if such I may call it) of a town as I've tried to describe it. Imagine that motley, colored aggregation in such surroundings; with the equally picturesque spectators on the



housetops; turkey gobblers & dogs & burros around—then an Arizona turquoise sky and if your Moors in Morocco can beat this picture I want to see it.

That's the Hopi land I'm getting now to know and to think that in a very, very few years all this will be gone, for the Government is doing all in its power to stop their dances & ceremonies. These are the last Indians of the U.S. to retain their original customs & ceremonial rites—the last ones to retain their original dresses & modes of living.

Hiller's work is not new to the Book Club. In 2010, he wrote the club's well-received keepsake *Jo Mora: California Cowboy & Artist*. This new, authoritative biography reflects the accumulated wisdom of 25 years of Mora scholarship and exhibition curation. Hiller also serves as curator of the Jo Mora Trust, which has permitted him unlimited access to the family papers. His masterful approach to interweaving Mora's personal writings with straightforward biographical information makes for an entertaining read. "This biography overflows with primary source material about Jo Mora," stated Hiller. "It offers an unprecedented opportunity to discover, in detail and in one place, his remarkable life."

Readers are fortunate that the Mora family saved an abundance of material that Jo created over his lifetime, from childhood stories and journals to letters written while exploring the American Southwest. "It's my hope that this publication will interest existing Mora fans, while bringing those unfamiliar with his work into the fold," Hiller stated. "Largely using Mora's own words and photos from the family collection, readers new to Mora will discover a creative, gentle, and talented person, while those familiar with him will add depth to their understanding and appreciation of this real-world artist and cowboy."

One of the most delightful aspects of this book is how clearly it conveys Mora's engaging personality and his lifelong ability to forge deep personal and professional relationships. We read the moving family letters that Mora wrote while in Army training, and peek into journal entries that describe friends made while riding the California Trail. In Mora's notes on creating his life's masterpiece—the cenotaph to Father Junipero Serra in Carmel—we sense the reverence he held for Father Mestres, priest at that Mission. Architect and sculptor Chester R. Phillips, who in 1937 supervised Mora's decorative work on the Monterey County Courthouse renovation, observed: "Because Jo Mora was a versatile, wide-awake, self-made, hardworking man who had picked the life he enjoyed and made a total success of it, to work with him was an unforgettable experience."

Mora seemed to succeed at the challenge facing all artists: to remain of the world, yet imaginatively beyond it. Working in an era of significant cultural shifts, he was aware of how quickly life was changing for the cowboy and the American Indian. His art reflects the rawness and color of his time spent among the vaqueros and the Hopi, his discoveries along the California Mission Trail, and his deep fascination with California history. His creative power interprets these early twentieth-century social and cultural realities in an impressively broad range of artistic forms.

One of those forms was writing for children. Mora's little known literary efforts reflect an intimate, informal, and witty writing style. Consider his preface to *Fairy Animaldom* (1901), in which he bemoans the loss of the magical, familiar stories of childhood:

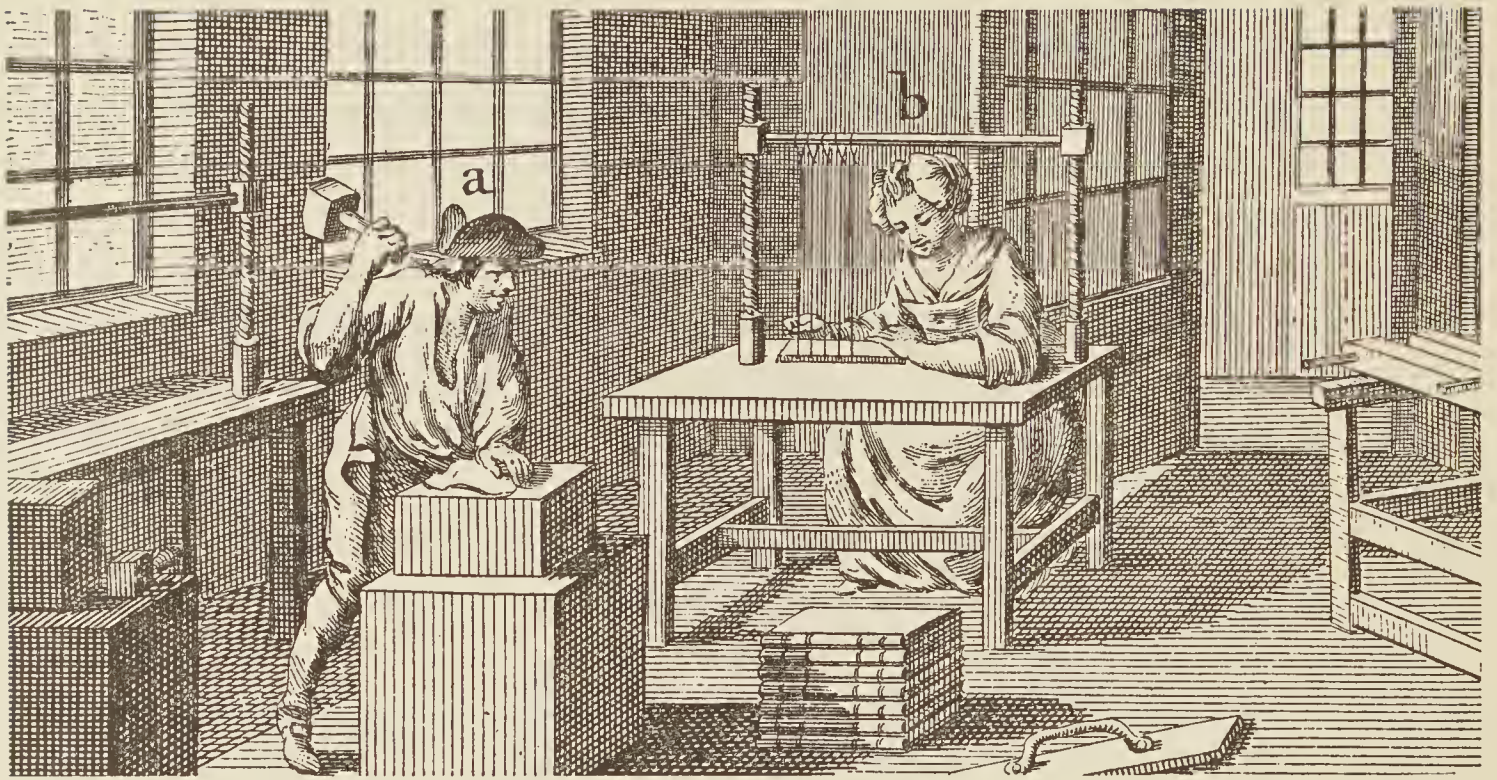
“The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” Says the old adage and a good old adage it is too. Somehow or other all good old things are good. Are they not? Very well then: if the pudding is proved good, after the required ordeal of course, why shouldn’t we stick to it? . . . Things must be dished to us in so many different ways now—be they puddings, pictures, print or goodness knows what not—and yet when our delicate up to date appetites are cloyed by them, we cry and cry for more. So naturally the good old things are given a complete overhauling: then they’re cut away a bit here and padded a trifle there: then they’re fussed with, over and over again, till one wonders where we are ever going to stop.

Mora’s work, influenced so directly by his personal experience, exemplifies the poet Wallace Stevens’s observations that “the imagination is not artifice added to human nature.” Rather, the imagination engages with and interprets our day-to-day lives, serving as a “mighty survival mechanism in tumultuous times.” At every turn, Hiller’s detailed narrative reveals the interdependence of life and art that characterized Mora’s experience, and manifested itself in artistic realism, accuracy of detail, humor, and historical authenticity. While distinctly apolitical, Mora’s art has a down-to-earth, practical quality that at times seems driven by his need to instructively interpret the past so that we can lead better lives in the present.

Like his predecessors Whitman, Thoreau, and Twain, Mora was unfashionably democratic in his ideology. Multilingual and of French and Spanish extraction, he was at ease in many cultures while himself embracing the rugged individualism we associate with the American West. His art elevated the cultural importance of the Western frontier, presaging broad and innovative shifts in twentieth-century thought and expression.

The Life and Times of Jo Mora illustrates the power of one artist to use his experience to create necessary worlds for us to inhabit—or, in Stevens’s phrase, “to give life to the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive of it.” Mora’s imaginative fictions relate to California and the West, but also embrace American history, humor, and humanity. He reminds us that the subject matter of all art is life, and he enshrines these truths by celebrating the great glories of nature and of the human heart.

✿ A member of the board of trustees for the Book Club of California, Gail Jones is a collector of children’s books, poetry, and literary first editions. She has served on many nonprofit boards, is a longtime writer and editor, and has written two books for children. She lives happily in a house of books in San Rafael, California



The American Bookbinders Museum

MADELEINE ROBINS

How often do you look at a book? Not read it, but look at the physical, everyday object? For most people books are containers—for story, for ideas, for information. Even collectors tend to focus on a book's contents, or perhaps its external appearance.

In an increasingly digital world, fewer people interact physically with books. Those who do may not consider them as objects that can engage the senses and give pleasure in and of themselves: the weight, the smell of paper and ink, the nap of bookboard or leather, the vibrant color of a tipped-in illustration. Books are constructed according to a millennium-old model, modified over time but still essentially the same as when the Codex replaced the scroll as a repository of information, and until the last two hundred years, each book was made by hand. The story of the book is, quite simply, the story of bookbinding and bookbinders. And that is where the American Bookbinders Museum comes in. Worldwide, there are many institutions that celebrate and record the history of printing, but the American Bookbinders Museum is the only museum in the world to focus on the culture, history, and tools of binders and binderies.

Located in San Francisco, ABM was founded by Tim James, a bookbinder for more than two decades in the Mission District. In outfitting and upgrading the equipment in his commercial bindery, James became fascinated with the history of the craft, and even more, in the people who practiced it. Researching and acquiring vintage materials, James amassed a collection of equipment, books, and ephemera which demanded to be shared. Initially housed in a building next door to James's bindery, in 2015 the museum relocated to its permanent home in SF's South of Market district, where it houses not only a collection of primarily nineteenth-century bookbinding machines and tools, but also a research library and archive.

Since its opening, ABM has been fortunate to acquire several important collections of books and archives, including the Kathleen V. Roberts Collection of Decorated Publishers' Bindings, over 400 volumes spanning the 1830s–1920s, and displaying the range and artistry in nineteenth-century book covers made possible by emerging technology. In late 2016, the museum received a donation of the full set of finishing tool patterns for the Hoole Tool Company, a collection of over 1300 items which provides a record of changes in technology, and of the evolution of an art designed to appeal to the book-buying public. The library also includes the archives of several important bookbinders, as well as books and ephemera on binding techniques, bindery trade unions, and bindery tools. The library is available to researchers by contacting the librarian Elspeth Olson at librarian@bookbindersmuseum.org.

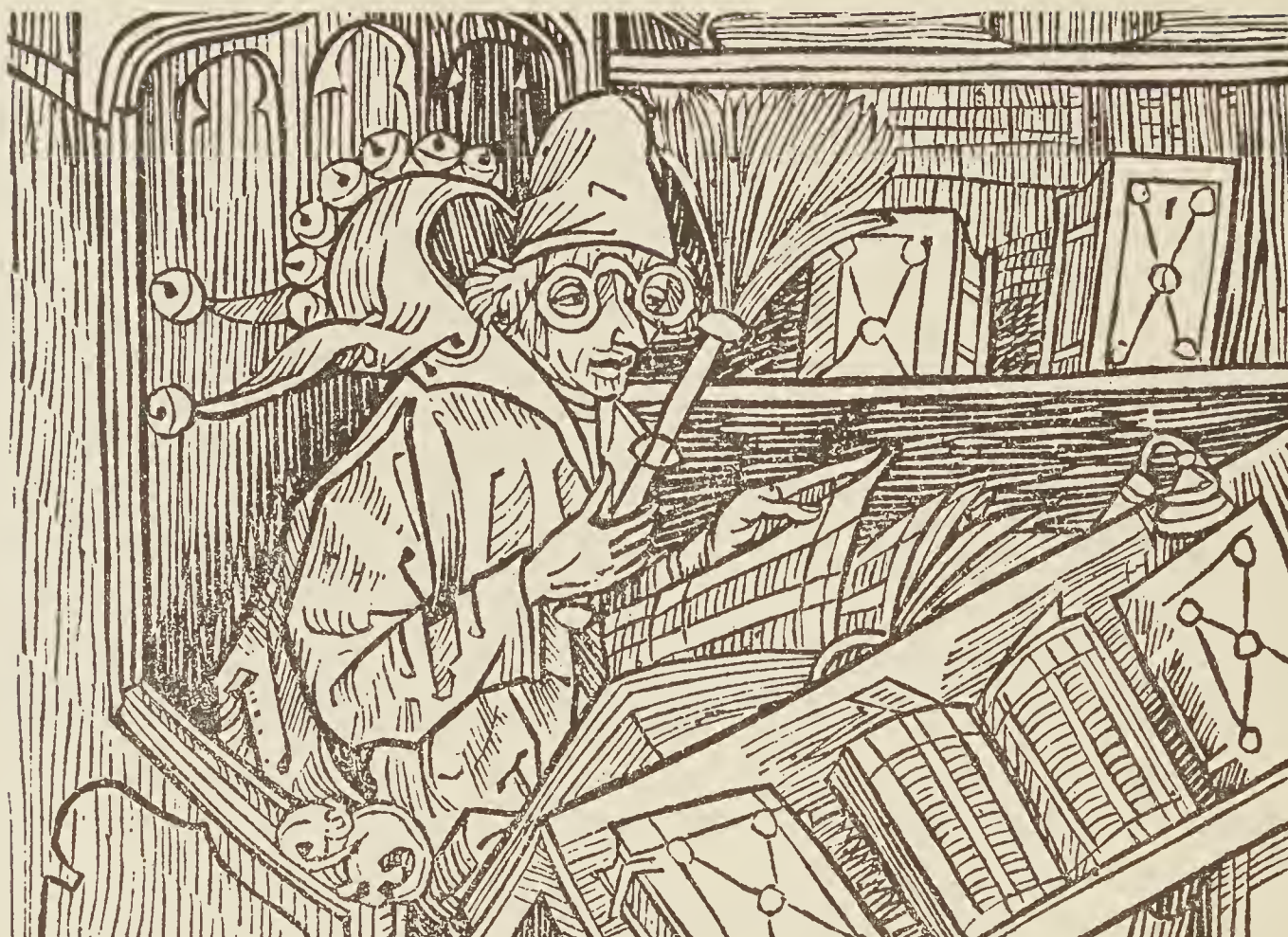
The showpiece of ABM's experience is its docent-led tour. These tours start with a discussion of the tools and techniques used for a millennium to create a small number of books. The tours segue into the changes that the Industrial Revolution brought to book production, reading, and the culture at large. Using working equipment such as a letterpress, guillotine, and book sewing machine, docents follow the evolution of the book from a privilege limited to the wealthy, to the commonplace possession of the masses, as mass-production made reading and book ownership economically possible for everyone.

Since opening in its new location, ABM has played host to exhibits from the Hand Bookbinders of California and the Mexican Museum, and mounted exhibits drawing from the museum's collection on woman in bookbinding, bookbinding manuals, and the 1966 Florence flood and its impact on book conservation and restoration techniques. *Market Bound*, a new exhibit on Publishers' Bindings, opens August 10 and runs through November 2.

San Francisco has a rich, vibrant, active community of readers, book artists, printers, artisans, and bookbinders. ABM exists within that ecology as a link between commercial and artisanal binders, but hopes to encompass book arts and touch on all parts of book production: paper-making, ink making, printing, marbling, gilding, and stamping. ABM hopes to establish partnerships with book arts, reading, binding, and print-related organizations, as well as community partnerships with neighboring museums and arts organizations such as the Cartoon Art Museum, Litquake, SF in SF, Gross Magazine, and the Mexican Museum. The museum hopes to establish strong ties with area schools, and to offer workshops and visits that enrich curricula and foster an appreciation of the book from its earliest days to its future.

 *Madeleine Robins is acting director of the American Bookbinders Museum.*

The American Bookbinders Museum is located at 355 Clementina Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets in San Francisco. The Museum is open Tuesday–Saturday from 10 a.m.–4 p.m., with docent-led tours at 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m. Special tours for groups, as well as workshops and team building exercises, are available. Please call 415-824-9754 or visit bookbindersmuseum.org.



Reviews

William S. Reese, *The Best of the West: 250 Classic Works of Western Americana*. New Haven: William Reese Company, 2017.

GARY F. KURUTZ

The American West as represented in this fabulous bibliography by antiquarian bookseller William Reese is vast in its geographical coverage, ranging from the Hawaiian Islands, north to Alaska and the Arctic, east to Iowa, and south to Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas. As defined in this monumental bibliography, the American West is not confined to the US territory between the Canadian and Mexican borders, and no one area dominates. Chronologically, this dean of Americana dealers begins his bibliography with Cabeza de Vaca's compelling narrative of survival printed in 1555 and ends with J. Frank Dobie's famous cattle book *The Longhorns* published in 1941. To quote a Reese Company advertisement, the rest of the bibliography includes "everything in between." Naturally, the earlier titles focus on discovery and exploration, documenting harrowing voyages through Pacific storms, death-defying treks across previously unknown deserts and glaciers, and those who explored the interior of the country by venturing up and down the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. As the decades passed, Westward expansion by the US, the war with Mexico, the lure of gold, encounters with Native Americans, and the opening of enormous regions to growth with the completion of steamship and railroad lines, generated a rich and unparalleled body of literature.

In his introduction, Reese explains: "This list is based upon my almost fifty years of experience in the bibliography of the Trans-Mississippi West. During much of that time I have been the leading bookseller in the field, and at least one copy—in some cases, several dozen copies—of every book described here has passed through my hands, in addition to thousands of related titles. From this I have drawn together what I consider the best books in the field."

In addition, over these many years, the William Reese Company has produced the finest body of booksellers catalogs that deal with Americana, exceeding even the vaunted catalogs of Edward Eberstadt and Sons. Fortunately, too, the company still issues thick, beautifully designed catalogs in hard copy, a rarity in this day-and-age of the Internet. Not to be forgotten in creating *The Best of the West*, this New England scholar has authored several important books and scores of articles on Americana including, *Six Score: The 120 Best Books on the Range Cattle Industry* (1989) and *Stamped with a National Character: Nineteenth Century American Color Plate Books* (1999).

Reese's opening sentence for the first entry illustrates how well he immediately articulates the value of a particular title: "Cabeza de Vaca's *La Relacion y Comentarios* is an American first in many ways: the first autobiography to recount experiences there, the first published travel account, the first Indian captivity narrative, the first book on Texas, and the first book largely about the American West." I also like the fact that this generous New Haven scholar did not mind incorporating mythology into his compilation. After all, much has been told about the mythic West from books to films and why not recognize that fact? For example, Pat Garrett's *The Authentic Life of Billy the Kid*, is anything but authentic. Reese, however, notes, "The whole point of the Kid legend is not so much the facts as the legend itself, and it is from this work that the much later literature springs." Reese also points out works that include colorful but questionable anecdotes. *The Ute War* (1879) by Thomas F. Dawson and F. J. V. Skiff is a good case in point. "Many stories circulate about the rarity of this book," our author writes, "the most colorful being the assertion that sheets of the books were used for cannon wadding during the final conflict with the Utes."

As this bookman readily admits, others may have favorite titles not included in his book, but that is the nature of making a selection and who better to do so than this biblio-gent? With all his experience, selecting 250 titles to represent such a massive and diverse region was, no doubt, an immense but joyful challenge. This book reviewer is an unabashed Californiac and drawn to obvious California titles like Francisco Miguel Venegas' *Noticias de la California*, Frank Marryat's gold rush recollection, *Mountains and Molehills*, Mark Twain's *Roughing It*, and John Muir's *The Mountains of California*, to name just a few. Many Zamorano 80 titles, of course, are featured. However, reading this compilation expands and enriches one's appreciation of the many and diverse works devoted to the Colorado gold rush, exploration of the Rockies and the Dakotas, the Hudson's Bay Company's exploits, the tragic Indian wars, and the romanticized cattle trade. Such works as William Ellis' *A Journal of a Tour around Hawaii* (1825), covering the beginning of the island's mission period, opened my eyes to look beyond the

California coastline. Incidentally, Ellis introduced the first printing press in the South Seas, and with Hiram Bingham, printed a hymnal in 1823, the first book printed in Hawaii. All of these titles so skillfully profiled by Reese, can only add to our appreciation of the incredible history that played such a pivotal role in shaping both the national and the world's perception of the West.

The American and Canadian West inspired some of the greatest pictorial works. Louis Choris's 1822 atlas to accompany the Kotzebue expedition was published with 104 colored lithographic plates of the Northwest Coast, California and Hawaii, delineating Native Americans, missions, settlements, and grand scenery. Further, it ranks as the first important travel book illustrated by lithography. Prince Maximilian of Wiede's 1839–1841 atlas folios with its stunning Karl Bodmer hand-tinted prints of the tribes of the upper Missouri stands as "The most important illustrated work of Western Americana, and the greatest color plate book devoted to North American Indians." Also described in enthusiastic detail are Reese's entries on George Catlin's landmark books and his spectacular *North American Indian Portfolio*, Ferdinand V. Hayden's *The Yellowstone National Park* with its fifteen chromolithographs of the Yellowstone, based on Thomas Moran's gorgeous paintings, and the great government folio *Atlas to Accompany the Monograph on the Tertiary History of the Grand Canon District* with its double sheet panoramas based on William Holmes's sketches are showstoppers. I know from personal experience, showing students or a tour group Bodmer's brilliant rendition of the Hidatsa warrior Pehriska Ruhpa with his incredible headdress always generates looks of awe and reverence for this iconic image of the Native American.

The role of photography and its emergence in spreading the visual knowledge of the West is skillfully told by Reese by including several of the greatest works of this type: J. D. Whitney's *Yosemite Book* (1868) with its original albumen photographs by C. E. Watkins, and photographer A. J. Russell's *The Great West Illustrated* (1869) documenting the building of the transcontinental railroad. A pleasant surprise to this reviewer is Henry Y. Hind's exceedingly rare 1860 portfolio *Photographs Taken on Lord Selkirk's Settlement on the Red River of the North, to Illustrate a Narrative of the Canadian Exploring Expeditions in Rupert's Land* with its thirty original photographs of Native Americans and landscapes near present-day Winnipeg. Edward S. Curtis's (No. 234) monumental twenty-volume work with its accompanying twenty large portfolios of photogravures did so much to preserve Native American culture by combining art photography with anthropology. Reflecting the emergence of the modern era, *Taos Pueblo* (No. 242) with its sublime original photographs by Ansel Adams, combined with the elegant prose of Mary Austin, and designed and printed by the Grabhorn Press in 1930, is recognized as "Probably the most famous of modern photographic works of the West."

Our Book Club of California readership will be delighted with the inclusion of H. M. T. Powell's gold rush diary, *The Santa Fe Trail*, published by the club in 1931, not only because of the important text but also because of its printer, the Grabhorn Press. Reese in his commentary, of course, makes note of the many Western Americana titles printed by the Grabhorn brothers but also adds: "The Book Club of California

has been an important patron of fine printing and publisher of important Western Americana, throughout its existence.”

Reese features, as the decades passed, the evolution of Western Americana from well-written contemporary government survey reports by the likes of John C. Fremont and William Emory to respected reminiscent accounts such as William Manly’s *Death Valley in 49*. Manly, a survivor of that deadly trek across the forbidding desert, wrote his text nearly forty-five years after the event. In addition, the *Best of the West* does feature important secondary works including Hiram Chittenden’s classic *The American Fur Trade* (1902) and Walter Prescott Webb’s *The Great Plains* (1931). Seminal interpretations of the Westward movement are included as exemplified by Frederick Jackson Turner’s landmark *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893).

Each entry includes basic bibliographic data followed by a well-crafted summary of contents along with significance, rarity, and citations in other bibliographies or auction catalogs. Often, Reese makes ample note of later printings, editions, and when appropriate, English language editions. He emphasizes the best and not necessarily the first edition, or points out particular features such as the fabulous map found in Lewis and Clark’s cornerstone work, *History of the Expedition* (1814). As stated in his entry: “Today it [the map] represents 85 to 90 percent of the total value of the book.” Several times he points out that a later edition is actually more desirable. Reese, being the great bookman that he is, frequently quotes noted scholars and collectors of the American West and those who specialize in a particular region or subject. Naturally, the eloquent insights of that extraordinary carto-historian-bibliographer, Carl I. Wheat, Henry R. Wagner, that trail blazing collector and bibliographer, and one of the finest historians of the West, William Goetzman, to name just three, are cited with frequency. All of these features will help anyone from the collector to the bookseller to the library curator in assembling an exhibit or justifying a new acquisition.

As a true work of reference destined to grace any Western bookshelf, Reese packs in a concluding essay describing the major bibliographies cited in each entry; another section lists frequently cited references; and *The Best of the West* ends with the all-important author and title index. Beautifully designed, with a leatherette spine, rust-colored cloth, and gold-gilt, the volume is generously illustrated with full-color photographs not only of title pages but also reproductions of beautiful plates and unusual pictures.

In short, William Reese is to be applauded for creating and publishing a work of lasting value that historians, bibliographers, and booksellers will cite with regularity for generations to come.

✪ Gary F. Kurutz is executive director of the California State Library Foundation and past president of the Book Club of California.

Alastair M. Johnston, *Dreaming on the Edge: Poets and Book Artists in California*. New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2016.

DANELLE MOON

Dreaming on the Edge takes the reader on a circuitous 150-year “biblio-tour of California,” with a focus on how artists, printers, and poets shaped the development of the book across time. The journey begins with the boomtown era of San Francisco during the gold rush and after, followed by a view of twentieth-century art, poetry, and printmaking from San Francisco to Los Angeles. It ends with a brief history of the second wave of book artists and the academic programs supporting book arts. The book is beautifully illustrated. The front cover presents a chromolithograph postcard by Edward H. Mitchell (1912), and the endpapers are from the John Henry Nash type-ornament collection in the Bancroft Library. It is laid out, loosely chronologically and thematically, in thirty chapters, with photographs throughout documenting early printmaking and the book as art from the 1960s to the present.

In the preface, Alastair Johnston argues that “self-publishing is a key component of creative growth in California” and that this unbound creativity has been influenced by multiple social movements, politics, and a rebellious spirit against social conformity. The synergy between printers, artists, and writers over 150 years provides a context for understanding the unique diversity of California’s history, culture, and politics. Indeed, to examine the role of “the form of the book as a vehicle for self-expression” is to study Californian identity—or the geography and culture of shaped poetry through book art.

Johnston traces the diverse history of book arts, presenting an eclectic cast of radical characters: conscientious objectors, anarchists, pacifists, feminists, hippies, beatniks, and Buddhists. Among writers and printers, the usual suspects from the twentieth century are well represented: Rexroth, Duncan, Everson, Jeffers, Ginsberg, Burroughs, Spicer, Patchen, Ritchie, Nash, Hoyem, the Grabhorn brothers, Black Sparrow, White Rabbit, Ruscha, and others. While the narrative focuses dominantly on men, Johnston weaves in the roles played by women, including Idah Strobbridge, Florence Lundborg, Joanne Kyger, and Frances Clark Butler. The creation of academic and nonprofit programs provided a training ground for women and men printers and artists that influenced the second wave of book artists from 1960 to the present. Academic programs at University of California, Santa Cruz, University of California, Santa Barbara, Mills College, California College of Arts and Crafts, Claremont College, and the Pacific Center for the Book Arts are examined among others.

The first four chapters focus on the early history of San Francisco, providing the literary context that shaped demand for newspapers, periodicals, photo books, chapbooks, postcards, and ephemera. The oldest of the periodicals of this period, the *Newsletter*, featured the stories of Bret Harte and was followed by the *Wasp*, the *Argonaut*, and the *Lark*, among others. Johnston provides a rich narrative, with local character and color in his prose, providing a fascinating look at this period. While San Francisco

dominates as the hub for fine printing, Southern California, once considered a wasteland in this regard, is rescued by the likes of Ward Ritchie and Lawrence Clark Powell and enhanced by SoCal transplants, among them wood engraver Paul Landacre. One can easily see the interplay between East and West Coast talent in creating a very unique culture of printing in California.

One of the book's strengths is its focus on the birth of the postmodern era and underground publishing, starting with Henry Miller, Anaïs Nin, Bern Porter, Kenneth Patchen, and Kenneth Rexroth. Patchen's *Journal of Albion Moonlight* represented the intersection of poetry with an articulated typography as a linear bound book. As Johnston so elegantly describes, Patchen's "presenting text in complex ways" prepared the way for a new printing aesthetic that included variety of scale, white space, and dramatic illustration (64).

Johnston enhances the narrative with some insightful firsthand accounts by printers and artists. For example, he describes the experience of those working with William Everson and recounts a story told to him by Graham Mackintosh: "Mackintosh recalled helping him print at St. Albert's, unaware that Everson was a 'shouter'—given to spontaneous ejaculatory praise. Mackintosh was carrying a galley of hand-set type when Everson claimed 'OhmyGod!!' shattering the silence, causing Mackintosh to pie the type all over the floor." (109)

The postwar years produced a cultural mecca in California that inspired creativity in poetry and printing. Johnston presents well the emergence of the beatnik generation and the conflicts between the old guard that included Jack Spicer and Robert Duncan. He also traces the emergence of the White Rabbit Press and the Black Sparrow Press, highlighting John Martin's unique marketing strategies, which included targeting libraries, forcing an all-or-nothing purchase requirement, with no review or return policies.

While the bulk of this history is heavily male, snapshots of women printers and poets do emerge. Chapter twenty-two explores the life of Joanne Kyger and her contributions as a poet and writer, and her journals present her insider view of the anti-beatnik sentiment of the Spicer-Duncan circle. Chapter twenty-seven is focused on women and begins with a description of the Women's Co-operative Printing Union established in Oakland in 1868 and run by printer Marietta Stow, and moves on to the production of *Carrier Dove*, a feminist publication edited by Julia Fish Schlesinger. The anti-Vietnam war movement and the second-wave feminist movement inspired a new collective movement in printing. Kathleen Walkup, a self-taught printer, opened her first letterpress shop Five Trees Press, and in 1976 with Cheryl Mill opened Peartree Printers, the first letterpress shop run by women in San Francisco since the nineteenth century. Five Trees Press represented a women's collective that included Kathleen Walkup, Cheryl Chaney Miller, Jaime Robles, Eileen Callahan, and Cameron Bunker. The second-wave feminist movement would inspire a new collective movement in printing.

The last three chapters address the second wave of book art production, which is illustrative of the role of women as printmakers, bookbinders, designers, and artists.

The birth of academic and nonprofit centers is also prominently described, including the formation of the Codex Foundation and the CODEX Book Fair and Symposium by Peter Koch. Johnston opines that “. . . CODEX fails to engage a larger audience. . .” where “. . . they too often focus on one aspect of the book [text, illustration, structural concept],” thus guaranteeing rarity. Although CODEX has created an artist environment that is grounded on traditional and post-modern interpretations of the meaning of the book, it seems equally true that the fine press movement is similar in creating intentionally rare, finely crafted limited edition works. Despite Johnston’s critique of CODEX, he has a strong appreciation in the book arts ability to transform our thinking about the “. . . intrinsic nature of the book.” (202) In these final chapters Johnston teases out his favorite artists while revealing the diverse landscape of the book as art. He provides a critique of the meaning of the book and playfully embraces the deconstruction of book arts as mastered by many seasoned book artists, such as Julie Chen and Mark Head. Head defines his approach using multimedia stating “it’s a rift between illustrated mind and map of consciousness . . . poetic inspiration.” (202) Hedi Kyle’s “creatively engineered structures,” and those by Julie Chen represent both bound and unbound books and are indicators of the new genre and the creativity and diversity of the book arts in the twenty-first century.

Dreaming on the Edge is a welcome addition to the history of the book, printmaking, and book art in California. Johnston’s extremely dense narrative is presented circularly, bringing a nuanced approach to the fine press movements across time and making connections to the early master printers and writers. The last two chapters slimly address the birth of the contemporary artist book movement, while offering an interesting perspective on the “intrinsic nature of the book” and the role of novelty, surprise, and visual representation in postmodern book production. I was happy to see many of the great masters recognized, including Harry and Sandra Reese, Carolee Campbell, Johanna Drucker, Julie Chen, Gaylord Schanilec, Peter and Donna Thomas, Felicia Rice, Kitty Maryatt, Peter Rutledge Koch, and many others.

As much as I enjoyed Johnston’s prose and research, as a historian I was disappointed by the lack of footnotes and found the index difficult to use. Still, this book should be considered as a text for college courses in book arts, history, and interdisciplinary studies. I am certain that printers, writers, and artists will also enjoy this delightful narrative.

☛ Danelle Moon is head of special research collections, Skofield Printers Collection, and artist books curator at University of California, Santa Barbara.

Peter Koch Printer: Embodied Language and the Form of the Book. A Descriptive Bibliography [1974-2016].

Hard Words: Memory and Death in the Wild West.

Against Design: On Thinking and Printing.

Together, three volumes, forming a catalogue of the exhibition *Peter Koch Printer: A Forty-Year Retrospective*, held at the Stanford University Libraries, May 24—October 15, 2017. Published by Editions Koch and the Stanford University Libraries. 400 copies in paper wrappers.

BRUCE WHITEMAN

In his introduction to the third volume of this massive *reificatio* of the career of Bay Area printer Peter Koch, Russell Maret—a student at one time of Koch’s and a master craftsman and artist himself—makes a fruitful point about fine press printers. The cliché has it that each book, as designed and printed, is supposed to provide a special, indeed unique envelope for the text it surrounds and embodies. But, as Maret points out, if you line up the books of the Doves Press or the Kelmscott Press on a shelf, they all look pretty much the same: austere and bound in off-white vellum in one case, more exuberant and bound in blue-paper boards in the other. Maret’s point is that the printers had already achieved “selfhood” when they began to make books, and that their catalogues raisonnées do not really demonstrate any evolution or personal development, however beautiful the objects themselves are. The same might also be said of printers who are not fine printers in the usual sense, but just good printers—Bodoni or Baskerville, for example.

The same is not true of Peter Koch. While I cannot say that I agree wholeheartedly with Mark Dimunation’s contention, in Volume 1, that “the consistent feature of Koch’s work is that it is never predictable,” the retrospective exhibition at Stanford of his life’s work and the catalogue which records it demonstrate that Koch has indeed evolved and changed course over the years, even if that evolution is primarily one of increasing mastery of his art rather than unpredictable “punctuated equilibria,” to use Stephen Jay Gould’s term. There are books in Koch’s *oeuvre* that are strikingly consanguineous—the Heraklitos and the Neruda *Ode to Typography*, for example, or the Parmenides and Wagener’s *Zebra Noise*—but there are also seemingly isolated masterpieces, like *Watermark*, which really have no brothers and sisters in the Koch catalogue, only cousins, as it were, as well as books that one might not identify at fifty paces as Koch products—usually books that were executed for someone else, the short-lived Rainmaker Editions, for example, or the books published under his wife’s imprint. Koch’s statement in an interview that “we must hold beauty in our hands” when we handle a typographically distinguished book, is broad enough in implication to have allowed him to experiment within the strictures that he made evident early on: balance, appropriate type faces drawn mainly from the Dutch and Italian traditions, and

bestowing on a printed book a “totality of meaning” in which every detail is closely and intelligently thought out and perfectly executed. There are books in the Koch canon that one may like less or more than others, but there are no obvious failures.

Greeks, Italians, and surrealist cowboys from Montana are the three overarching Muses whom Maret identifies as watching over the three “periods” in Koch’s output. There was an early period too, when he was learning his craft, first in Montana and subsequently in Berkeley, establishing his business and finding his aesthetic feet. The book that everyone seems to agree represents the end of Koch’s apprenticeship (distinguished as even that was) and the beginning of his maturity is his version of Guy Davenport’s translation of the fragments of Heraklitos (1990), a small and limited edition book (100 copies) that got everything just right: appropriate paper, relevant binding, beautifully chosen types (Gill Sans for the Greek, Bembo for the English), and superb presswork. *Point Lobos*, Koch’s almost obligatory foray into the poetry of Robinson Jeffers from three years earlier, may represent his arrival as a California printer (Ward Ritchie had produced a Jeffers, and so had William Everson); the Heraklitos represents his arrival as a printer, pure and simple, even if the book would be just the first of several devoted to the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers (Diogenes, Parmenides) and, by comparison with the later ones, a rather modest book on many counts. *Watermark* (2006) is the, well, high watermark of Koch’s passion for Italian typography. Its production constituted a virtual theatre piece, involving an extensive cast of characters, a press floated down the Grand Canal in Venice, photogravures printed back in California, and doubtless countless bottles of Prosecco and Baume de Venise and countless pasta dishes to boot. Koch has paid homage to the influence of Aldus Manutius’s *Hypnerotomachia Polifili* (1499) on his career as a whole, but *Watermark* represents that influence in its most obvious and complex form.

As for Montana, the third of Maret’s “periods,” it is pervasive in one sense (you can take the boy out of Montana, but you can’t take Montana out of the boy), but most clearly present in a series of projects that relate to the destruction of the western landscape and the indigenous peoples in the period following Lewis and Clark. Indeed the centenary of the expedition provided Koch with a perfect moment to reflect on the aftermath of that event in a spirit absent from much of the hoopla associated with the anniversary. His *Hard Words* and *Nature Morte* are almost elemental in their make-up, and the more devastating for being so. *The Lost Journals of Sacajewea*, by contrast, was a complex typographic and design project that in some ways seems self-contradictory. For once, one feels that a highly crafted and highly expensive “text transmission object” may not form the right and proper reification of a story that is better told through the bald images and one-word poems of Koch’s earlier Western projects.

Many people have contributed to these three volumes, and their work demands admiration and recognition. Nina Schneider composed a fine and useful bibliography of Koch’s output for Volume 1. All the necessary information has been finely collocated, and I only wish that she had been a bit more anecdotal in her notes. (Who, for example, was Rainmaker Editions?) The long conversation among Koch, Monique

Comacchio, and Camden Richards that comprises most of Volume 3 is wonderfully lively and revealing. Russell Maret's introduction to that same volume, as well as Aaron Parrett's introduction to Volume 1, add tremendously to the richness of the catalogue and are always stimulating. In almost 600 pages there are almost no obvious errors—alright, Ludwig Zeller is Chilean, not Argentinean, and “equally as revealing” on p. 8 of Volume 3 is grammatically solecistic—and the design, for all that Koch has grave reservations about the very word, is lovely and the printing expert. Indeed the catalogue is nothing short of monumental, and everyone involved should be enormously pleased, not least the subject himself. The subject himself—an arranger of things, he calls himself—continues to make books, of course, and everyone who cares about the typographic arts continues to look forward to those new projects with great anticipation.

✂ Bruce Whiteman is a Toronto poet and head librarian emeritus of the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library at UCLA.

Boreas Fine Art

Artists' Books | Fine Press Books

1555 Sherman Avenue, Suite 362
Evanston, Illinois 60201 United States

Telephone 847 733 1803
www.boreasfineart.com

Russell Maret, *Some Problems with Red encountered by Russell Maret while day-dreaming in his studio and here explored with the aid of multichromatic letterpress*. One hundred copies printed on Zerkall Litho paper, bound in quarter cloth with paper-covered boards and housed in a plexiglass slipcase. 10.5 x 4.75 inches, 28 pages.

SUSAN ROETHER

Editor's note: Here is a book review about an illustrated book about the color Red. To appreciate the depth of the book's illustrations, one must see the original book; a reproduction would be false and misleading. The review must remain unillustrated.

Russell Maret's encounter with Red is a meeting of paper and colored ink and handset type, inspired by the author's singular desire: "It is my love of Red that makes me want to know it better."

It is this passion which informs the printer/writer/designer's letterpress offering of fourteen rectangular pages, bound in red, slipcased in deep green plexiglass. It's a whimsical but reverent study; intent on examining a "problem" that intrigued J. W. von Goethe and Ludwig Wittgenstein, not to mention Leonardo da Vinci.

Maret's description: "The book consists of five short texts dealing with the difficulties of describing and reproducing color, each of which is paired with an illustration. Four of the five illustrations are printed from linoleum, end-grain maple or metal type ornaments, while the fifth is drawn in ink with a compass."

The problem with Red lies in the limitations of language when confronted with a purely visual phenomenon, one familiar to all, yet particularly difficult to define except metaphorically or anecdotally.

Maret approaches his subject with a reference to John Ruskin's thoughts on describing the Gothic style. The Victorian critic suggests that a definition might be composed of observations as to what a style is *not*. This point of view leads to the proposition that we might begin by looking at what is *not* Red, to arrive at what is.

A tactile surprise to turn the page and encounter a rectangle of Zerkal Litho paper about five by ten inches, with the dull minutely pitted sheen of citrus peel, saturated with a sunny color richer than yellow—more California poppy than traffic cone—it could be described as tangerine. Or, one would have to concede that the printer has exactly reproduced the Orange color of an orange (Sunkist or navel). Immediately the semantics become troubling.

Facing the sunny glow of this familiar fruit, absolutely bound to it, is a page saturated to the edges in an equally intense but far less exuberant color—it is not wine nor grape but more reserved, even a bit melancholy, a twilight of Violet extending to the edges of a horizon from which the sun has set. Blue has asserted itself, a blue that overwhelms all but a trace of the missing color.

So, Maret makes a wordless argument in two pages, *en face*, showing the influence of Red by illustrating its absence. We see how it adds courage to shy Yellow, and emotional warmth to cold Blue. He allows the pages of pure color to speak—Orange and Purple are not Red. Therefore, we learn something about Red *in absentia*.

The explicit phenomenon the word Red describes could be said to be universal. Linguists studying the languages of isolated tribes have discovered that the words for black and white are usually the first color-descriptive words to appear. In cases where there is very limited color vocabulary, Red is the first to emerge after terms for light and dark. Words for green, brown, and yellow develop much later.

Red then is essential. As the artist Anish Kapoor observed: “Red is, of course, the color of the interior of our bodies. In a way, it’s inside out, red.”

Yet, intimate as our knowledge of this blood color is; there is still the problem.

When I say or write the word Red and mean to refer specifically to this color, is it possible to communicate my precise experience of it? In Maret’s words, “Red is a dreamed experience of a living mind—a creative act of imagination projected onto an undulating phenomenon. . . . Every experience of Red,” the author argues, “is unique.”

Wittgenstein would agree with this assessment. He wrote: “Our ordinary language has no means for describing a particular shade of color, thus it is incapable of producing a picture of this color.”

Turning a page of Maret’s book reveals a fresh argument in fourteen identically sized vertical bars of color. Beginning on the left as orange-red, the bars progressively lose yellow and veer towards blue. The effect is similar to the samples you might look at to choose house paint. This reader’s eye gauges the very subtle gradations which range from bright to medium to dark, each increment almost imperceptible. Yet the horizontal row of colored columns begins with a piercing shriek and ends with a sonorous bass tone.

Many scientists, beginning with Newton, have investigated the phenomenon of the color spectrum, but few poets have tried. When Goethe began his optical experiments for his 1810 book *Zur Farbenlehre, A Theory of Color*, he did so with the keen curiosity and confidence of an eighteenth century man of letters. He had no qualms about combining mathematical data obtained through scientific experiments with personal observations about the psychological and philosophical aspects of Red.

“I have known,” Goethe tells us, “men of education to whom Red’s effect was intolerable if they chanced to see a person dressed in a scarlet cloak on a grey cloudy day.”

He also comments, “it has been universally remarked that among savages (and robust, uneducated men) Red is a favorite color.” One has to assume that Goethe didn’t discover such information in laboratory experiments.

This book is an inquiry into the mystery, vitality, and fascination of color.

Another full-page illustration presents two equal-size rectangles—one yellow, one red, printed so as to concoct an orange square where they intersect. Color, Maret argues, is not a fixed point on a spectrum but a process involving subjective and physical conditions. There almost seems to be a trick to it, a bit of conjuring, the

intersection of two distinct parts slyly pulling a wholly different color out of the air—yet it happens before our eyes.

The science of optics defines color based on measurement of light waves; but that too, is a less than satisfactory answer to the problem. Maret quotes Webster's definition of Red:

“ . . . one of the four psychologically primary hues that is evoked in the normal observer under normal conditions by radiant energy from the long-wave extreme of the visible spectrum combined with a very small amount of radiant energy from the short wave extreme.”

“Who are these normal people” Maret asks, “and why should we be interested in their perceptions ?” It is clear that the dictionary definition does not shed any light on our problem with Red. Maret's questions lead us further into the mystery.

Regarding the final illustration in *Some Problems with Red* the author writes: “I wanted to create an image that approximated the experience of Red in real time; red as a phenomenon rather than red as an inert classification.”

The image Maret comes up with is a striated grid of various tones of red fractured into fine lines and cubes. A profusion of hues printed in swaths of pale and saturated shades approximates a way of seeing Red that makes the fractions of disparate colors seem to merge. The eye sees purple and orange and black and white; cherry and magenta and cinnabar combine in a raft of reds, swirling and unsteady.

This dense aggregation of printed color possesses a texture reminiscent of a handwoven piece of red fabric, faded and streaked, unfolded across two pages. It represents an attempt to avoid an “inert” red and create a living, breathing experience of the phenomenon. Perhaps the most ambitious of Maret's designs, these pages invite the eye to see a simulacrum of “slow motion,” as the fragments of color are depicted as mutable and evanescent.

The reader shares the mood of playful inquiry that Maret evokes at the start of his project and in the end, experiences first-hand the singular authority of the color Red.

It's tempting to quote John Ruskin: “The purest and most thoughtful minds are those which love colour the most.”

FROM THE COLOPHON

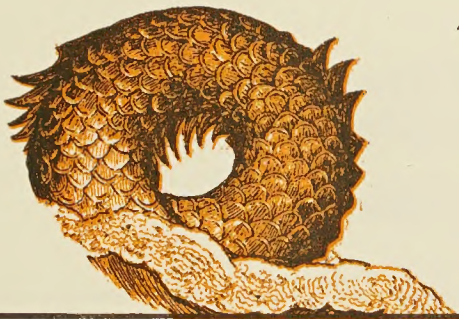
Some Problems with Red was designed and printed by Russell Maret with handset text in Stymie Medium and Gill Shadow. Illustrations were printed from linoleum, wood, or metal ornaments, with the exception of a circle drawn in ink. The text paper is Zerkall Litho, with handmade Yatsuo covering the boards. The binding is by Craig Jensen at Book Lab II, the plexiglass slipcase by Canal Plastics. One hundred copies were printed in 2016.

✎ Susan Roether is a playwright, essayist, and a member of the Book Club of California. Her book of essays *Reflections on Color* was published by Black Stone Press.

THE WILLIAM BLAKE GALLERY

from JOHN WINDLE *ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLER*

A new exhibition space in San Francisco dedicated to works created by the influential 19th century poet, artist, and engraver. Our opening exhibition features works by Blake's own hand, including a stunning tempera painting, an important preparatory wash painting, and the earliest impression of an illuminated plate printed by Blake ever offered for sale - a proof plate from *Songs of Innocence*. Also exhibited are many other prints of unparalleled quality, displaying Blake's range and many of his most iconic images.



49 Geary Street, Suite 205
San Francisco, CA 94108
(415) 986-5826
williamblakegallery.com
johnwindle.com



JOHN WINDLE ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLER

Offering an exceptional selection of fine and rare books and manuscripts in all areas, from medieval times through the twentieth century. We specialize in illustrated material, particularly the work of William Blake and his circle, children's books, medieval illuminated and text manuscripts; English and American literature, fine bindings and fine printing.

49 Geary Street, Suite 233, San Francisco, CA 94108
(415) 986-5826 | www.johnwindle.com | john@johnwindle.com

The Book Club of California proudly presents

ANTON ROMAN:

San Francisco's Pioneering Bookseller & Publisher

Inaugural presentation of the Kenneth Karmiole Endowed Lecture on the History of the Book Trade in California and the West by John Crichton

Book Club of California
October 30, 2017 at 6 PM

*

Huntington Library
January 17, 2018 at 7:30 PM

Reservations required:

(415) 781-7532 or programs@bccbooks.org

IN THE GALLERY

**From The Great Age of Scientific Voyages & Travels 1767-1890:
Twenty Notable Explorers & Related Works, Ex Libris Peter Farquhar**

September 6 - November 27 * Opening September 6, 5-7 PM

AUCTIONS OF EXCEPTIONAL BOOKS AND PRIVATE LIBRARIES EVERY TWO WEEKS

We invite consignments for upcoming sales.

For more information contact

bruce@pbagalleries.com

**SPECIALISTS IN EXCEPTIONAL BOOKS & PRIVATE LIBRARIES AT AUCTION
BOOKS ♦ MANUSCRIPTS ♦ MAPS ♦ PHOTOGRAPHS ♦ WORKS ON PAPER**

PBA GALLERIES

1233 Sutter Street : San Francisco, California 94109

(415) 989-2665 (866) 999-7224

www.pbagalleries.com

THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA is a cultural center, publisher, and library dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of the book and the book arts, with a particular focus on California and the West. Membership in the Book Club of California is open to all. Annual renewals are due by January 1, but new memberships are accepted throughout the year. Membership dues are: Regular, \$95; Sustaining, \$150; Patron, \$250; Sponsor, \$500; Benefactor, \$1,000, and Student, \$25. All members receive *The Book Club of California Quarterly* and, except Student members, the annual keepsake. Book Club of California members may pre-order forthcoming club publications at a 10 percent discount. Standing Order Members agree to purchase all Book Club of California publications and receive a 15 percent discount for doing so. All members may purchase extra copies of keepsakes or *Quarterlies*, when available. Club publications are made available for purchase by non-members only after pre-publication orders by members have been filled. The Book Club of California is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Portions of membership dues and all donations, whether monetary or in the form of books, are deductible in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code. The Book Club of California's tax-exempt number is 42-2954746. For more information, please call: (415) 781-7532, or toll-free (800) 869-7656. Email: info@bccbooks.org. Website: www.bccbooks.org.

OFFICERS

President: Randall Tarpey-Schwed

Vice-President: John Windle

Secretary: Stephen Zovickian

Treasurer: Bruce Crawford

DIRECTORS WHOSE TERMS EXPIRE IN 2017

Mary Austin, Gail Jones, Kenneth Karmiole, James Lee, Stephen Zovickian

DIRECTORS WHOSE TERMS EXPIRE IN 2018

Janice Braun, Bruce Crawford, Paul Robertson, Randall Tarpey-Schwed, John Windle

DIRECTORS WHOSE TERMS EXPIRE IN 2019

Marie Dern, Sharon Gee, Laurelle Swan, Kathleen Walkup

STAFF

Executive Director: Kevin Kosik

Membership Services & Office Manager: Lesya Westerman

Programs Manager: Yuri Hobart

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Development & Membership: Kenneth Karmiole and Sharon Gee

Executive: Randall Tarpey-Schwed

Finance: Paul Robertson

Library: Steve Zovickian

Programs: Kathleen Walkup

Publications: John Windle

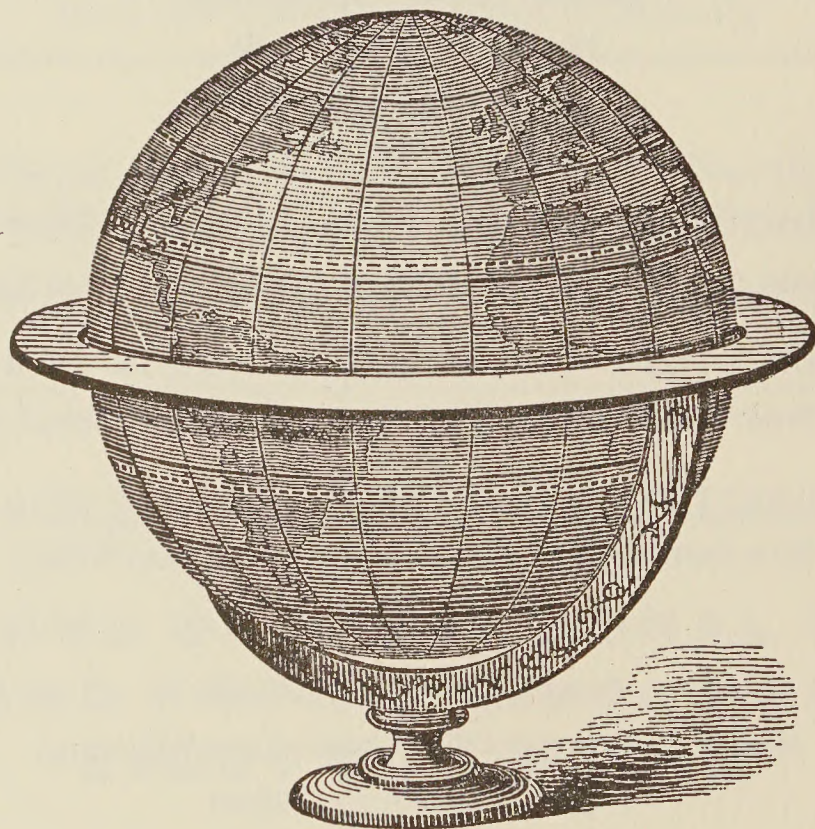
THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY

Editor: Peter Rutledge Koch

Managing Editor: Yuri Hobart



THE Book Collector



We publish quarterly in print. Our *online archive* from 1947 is there the moment you sign up. ~
\$125, €90 or £60 for a year of wit, pleasure and knowledge from www.thebookcollector.co.uk

Covers the Globe